



**Alternative Energy Resources Organization**

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EXHIBIT 7  
DATE 1/23/07  
HB 223

Chairman Sinrud and members of the Committee, my name is Jim Barngrover. I am the Agriculture and Food Systems Program Manager for the Alternative Energy Resources Organization. AERO is a Montana based, grassroots member organization promoting sustainable agriculture, renewable energy and conservation, and greater community self reliance.

We support HB 223 that would breath new life into Montana's Ag Innovation Centers. The work of the Ag Innovation Centers have been very complementary to AERO's mission.

As an example the Governing Board of the MT Ag Innovation Center supported the publication of "Abundant Montana", AERO's Directory To Sustainably Grown Montana Food with a grant of \$3000 in 2005. The \$3000 helped in printing 8000 copies of "Abundant Montana" which have been widely distributed through out Montana to; Libraries, Churches, Cooperative Extension offices, MT Ag Innovation Centers, the Dept. of Agriculture, food banks, farmers markets, natural food stores, agriculture organizations, hundreds of individuals, and numerous clubs throughout Montana.

In fact the Abundant Montana Directory has been recognized for it's excellence by seven other states which have bought our template to publish their own directories (PA, ID, KS, IA, MI, MN, VT).

Abundant Montana is more than a directory to Montana-grown food. It's a connection to the land, to our neighbors who farm the land, and to those who are committed to using locally grown food in their businesses. Where and how food is produced and how far it travels can determine whether people will prosper, whether local communities will thrive and whether we can enjoy scenic landscapes and Montana's open spaces.

As citizens, each of us can make important choices to support our local farmers and ranchers who are helping to conserve soil, protect drinking water, reduce pesticide use, strengthen rural economies and communities and safeguard open spaces. By supporting HB 223 you are supporting farmers, ranchers, and retail businesses. You are contributing to an abundant and sustainable Montana.

